DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 295 178 CS 211 272

AUTHOR Woodward, Virginia A.
TITLE Lessons from Eric: Talking and Writing about My Art.
INSTITUTION North Dakota Univ., Grand Forks. Center for Teaching and Learning.
PUB DATE May 88
NOTE 9p.; Document printed on light brown paper.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT Insights into Open Education; v20 n8 May 1988

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Art Activities; *Childrens Art; Classroom Communication; Early Childhood Education; Freehand Drawing; *Language Acquisition; Teacher Role; Teacher Student Relationship; *Verbal Learning; Young Children
IDENTIFIERS Beginning Writing; Communication Behavior

ABSTRACT

A videotape of one student, "Eric," age three years, engaged in dialogue with his teacher about a picture he has drawn, clearly demonstrates the rich language learning opportunities that language encounters on the topic of a student's art work provide for both the child and the teacher. In this encounter, Eric is able to convey affective feelings as well as cognitive understandings in his oral and written language. In addition, Eric is actively participating as a maker of meaning and continuing to learn about language and the use of other sign systems by using them in a meaningful situation. The teacher is not directing the learning but instead is learning what Eric knew from entering into dialogue, guiding him through questioning, and by observing his actions. This kind of learning event has significant potential because it allows the teacher to become part of the child's meaning making and to use the experience as she guides and extends future events using language and art in generating meaning. (ARH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED295178

CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA
GRAND FORKS 58202

Volume 20, Number 8
May 1988

Lessons From Eric
Talking and Writing About My Art

by

Virginia A. Woodward

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
V. Perrone
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CS211272

Lessons From Eric

Talking and Writing About My Art

By Virginia A. Woodward
School of Education
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN

A familiar practice in nursery and kindergarten classrooms is for the teacher to talk with children about their art work. In some instances, the teacher writes on the painting or crayoning what the child says about the picture. But, are teachers really exploring the learning potentials of these language encounters in terms of the child's knowledge of using the sign systems of art and language in signing meaning as a language user and as an artist?

Harste, Woodward, Burke (1984), in their research study of preschool children, found that children readily negotiated between art and writing as they made their ideas public. Young children were capable, self-monitoring participants in language encounters and knew what they knew and what they did not know (Harste, Woodward, Burke, 1984; Bissex, 1984; Goodman, 1979; Smith, 1981). Literacy events present continual content and process problems for the language user to which he/she must attend and modify existing patterns of responding. In any literacy event, the language user brings to bear all of his semiotic resources. These semiotic resources include all of our knowledge of signs from all different communication systems of language, math, drama, music, and art.

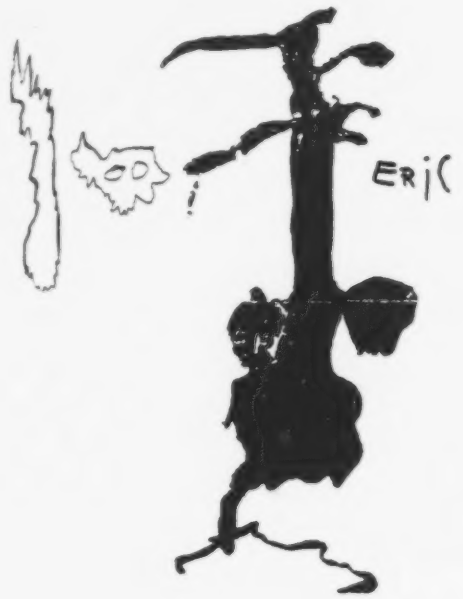
The videotape of Eric, age three years, engaged in dialogue with his teacher about his picture, clearly demonstrates the rich language learning that such a classroom event provides for both the child and the teacher. The videotape provides the teacher with a tool for reflecting on the interchanges occurring during the event. In this article, I shall walk through the dialogue, as well as the drawing and writing actions by Eric, highlighting the salient principles of language being demonstrated.

Eric completed his painting and brought the teacher to see his painting. She engages him in a language encounter focusing on both talking about and writing about the picture.

The teacher gives Eric a pen to write his name on his picture. Eric, at three years, writes his name conventionally. Even if Eric had written it with inventive symbols, the teacher would have encouraged him to label his picture. To know a work is ours, our names must be there. Four and five year old children in our Campus Children's Center recognize their inventive symbols for their names as easily as their name in conventional form.

The teacher asks Eric to tell her about his picture. "It's a kind of a rose that doesn't--these are the big thorns," says Eric, pointing to the big red circles. "It doesn't have thorns?" asks the teacher. Eric corrects her saying, "Yes, it does. There," pointing again to the thorns. Eric is monitoring the teacher's misconception of his commentary and he corrects her. Even at three years old, Eric knows that to share meaning with another orally one needs to monitor the conversation closely. The teacher requests clarification by saying, "Those are the thorns?" Eric responds, "Yea." The teacher then presents her view on big thorns saying, "Those are big thorns. We'll have to be careful."

The teacher asks Eric, "Who is this picture for?" Eric responds, "My Dad." "Does your Dad like roses?" asks the teacher. Eric doesn't take the teacher's lead here. Instead, he returns to drawing and talking about two other roses.



Eric is drawing a round circle with a pen. He says, "I saw this thing. This is a thing I saw like this. It was funny. It's funny like this and it made me jump." The teacher responds, "It did?" "Right on my top of my roof," says Eric. "Oh, my goodness! That's some special kind of a flower, isn't it?"

Eric now changes the conversation because paint and ink have gotten on his hand. He says, "It always gets some flower made out of paint." As he draws a circle within the circle, he continues to check the paint and the ink on his hand.

The teacher asks, "Do you want to write anything else on here about your picture?" Eric takes this lead by drawing a curvy line up the paper and then down in an oblong shape, saying, "I just get up, up. I just get up a big flower like this and then get down, down, down. Finished."

The teacher asks Eric again, "Do you want to write anything else on here about your picture?" Eric thinks a moment. The teacher repeats the question. Eric begins to write from left to right in his own personal cursive.

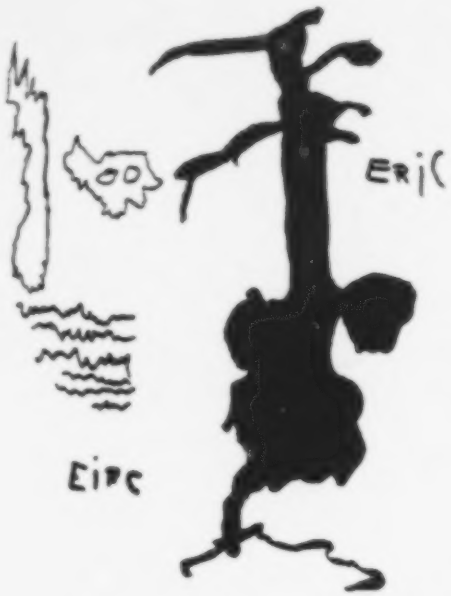
It is clear before Eric tells us that he has moved from drawing to writing. As he writes the first line left to right, he says, "This is how my Daddy writes. He always lets me write like this." The teacher confirms his statement by saying, "That's how adults write, isn't it?" Eric reminds her, "Children write like this," continuing to write in his personal cursive. The teacher asks, "You write like that, don't you?" Eric replies, "I ain't going to tell you." The teacher says, "That is okay," and Eric says, "When it is done I'll tell you." (How many of us like to be interrupted in our writing in order to read what we are saying?) Eric continues to write his five lines. He finishes and the teacher asks, "Do you want to read me what it says now?" Eric points to his writing and reads,

> *Well, Daddy. I love you. I love you, and I will hang it in your bedroom. And it will look pretty if you look at it every morning.*

The teacher presents her view that "that's a beautiful thing to say to your Daddy." She redirects her reaction back to Eric asking, "How will he feel when you give it to him?" Eric replies, "Happy." Eric is able to take the affective perspective of a loving parent in making this response.

Eric knows that he has written a note to his Dad. In letter format, there is always a message and a closing signature. Eric doesn't know how to write "from Eric" so he asks the teacher. The teacher knows this is a problem, but she is curious about how Eric will handle the problem. She asks, "What do you have here?" pointing to his name. Eric knows it is his name and he says, "But how do you write 'from Eric'?" The teacher throws the problem back by saying, "I wonder how you could write that. What do you think?" (See drawing, page 5)

Eric decides that he will just write his name. He writes, E, R. He puts the I between the E and R and says, "That's kind of funny, the I in the middle." He writes the C. The teacher confirms that he has switched his letters, but it is still his name. Eric replies, "But how funny!"



Significance of This Language Encounter

The significance of this language story is in the demonstrations of what Eric knows about art and language as sign systems. He is cognizant that each is a mode of representation used in thinking and in expressing ideas publicly.

Eric, age three, has come to this encounter with impressive knowledge of oral language, written language, and art as sign systems. He is eager to make and to share his meanings with others.

Knowledge of Sign Systems

Eric began by using art to represent symbolically his idea of a rose. Big thorns are a salient feature of his symbolic representation. Eric talked about other roses and used drawing as he talked to extend his sharing of meaning with his teacher.

His art symbols were significantly different symbols than those used for writing. His small drawings were circles and his big rose was big circles and a straight line.

Eric understands that written language is different from art as a mode of representation. Signing meaning is influenced by how it is used in a particular social setting but intentionality is always in the mind of the reader, the writer, or the artist.

His writing was either alphabetic letters or a personal cursive written left to right and top to bottom. In writing, Eric already knows directionality. He is able also to talk about the fact that he mixes up the letters in his name.

Eric is a risk taker in writing his message. He felt confident to use his personal cursive to placehold his message to his dad. His intention, to create a message, was evident in his reading of the text.

Using Oral Language

Language is learned socially. To participate in dialogue or in writing, a speaker or writer needs to take the perspective of the listener or the reader. Eric has already conceptualized the importance of being able to play these roles if you are going to be effective in monitoring the sharing of meaning. When his teacher misunderstood about the thorns, he corrected her.

Eric demonstrated also that he could maintain control of the interaction. The teacher asked if his dad liked roses and Eric did not follow that lead. Instead, he continued with two oral narratives about other roses and experiences with them. When he needed help on

how to write "from Eric," he asked for it. The teacher threw the problem back to him to solve which he did in the best way that he could at this time.

Conclusions

In this encounter, we learned that Eric was able to convey both these affective feelings as well as his cognitive understandings in his oral and written language. We don't have absolute proof, but we could hypothesize that he is beginning his concept that a rose stands for love in our culture.

Eric was actively participating as a maker of meaning in this encounter. He was continuing to learn about language and the use of other sign systems by using them in a meaningful situation. The teacher was not directing the learning but was learning what Eric knew from entering in dialogue, guiding him through questioning, and by observing his actions. This kind of learning event has significant potential because it allows the teacher to become part of the child's meaning making and to use the experience as she guides and extends future events using language and art in generating meaning. Its value for the learner is to allow for continued active participation in using signs meaningfully. Foremost, it becomes a learning event for both the child and the teacher.

References

Bissex, G. (1980). Gnys at wrk: A child learns to write and read. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Goodman, K. S., & Goodman, Y. M. (1979). Learning to read is natural. In L. B. Resnik and P. A. Weaver, eds. Theory and practice of early reading, Vol. 2. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Harste, J. C., Woodward, V. A., & Burke, C. L. (1984). Language stories and literacy lessons. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.

Teale, W. H. (1982). Toward a theory of how children learn to read and write naturally. Language Arts, 59(6): 555-570.

Dr. Virginia Woodward is an Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education at Indiana University. She is co-author of Language Stories and Literacy Lessons.

Subscribe to

HAVE YOU SUBSCRIBED?
IF SO, GIVE TO A FRIEND.

INSIGHTS into open education

Volume 21

IF YOUR SUBSCRIPTION HAS EXPIRED OR IS ABOUT TO EXPIRE, USE THE COUPON BELOW TO RENEW.

SOME PAST ARTICLES:

"The Constitution Bicentennial: A Celebration of Citizenship"

"Dealing With Feelings"

"Explorations in Making Meaning: A Case Study"

COMING UP NEXT FALL:

"Questioning Strategies to Encourage Critical Thinking"

"Johnny the Rat: Using the Child as our Informant"

PUBLISHED BY THE CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA. $3.50 PER YEAR. EIGHT ISSUES — SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, DECEMBER, JANUARY-FEBRUARY, MARCH, APRIL, MAY.

Note: If renewing, clip address imprint form from old issue and send along with coupon.

Please send me a year's subscription to INSIGHTS for 1988-1989. Enclosed is $3.50, payable to INSIGHTS by check or money order.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

_____ THIS IS A RENEWAL

INSIGHTS
Center for Teaching & Learning
Box 8158
University of North Dakota
Grand Forks, ND 58202

SUBSCRIBE TO INSIGHTS

INSIGHTS is published eight times during the academic year by the Center for Teaching and Learning, University of North Dakota.

Subscriptions are $3.50 per year payable by check or money order to INSIGHTS, Center for Teaching and Learning, Box 8158, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND 58202. Editor – Elizabeth Franklin.

INSIGHTS

Center for Teaching and Learning
Box 8158
University of North Dakota
Grand Forks, ND 58202

TO:

Dr. Robert W. Howe, Director
ERIC/SMEAC, OSU
1200 Chambers Rd., Rm 310
Columbus, OH 43212-1792